

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Reconsideration and allowance of the present application based on the following remarks are respectfully requested. Claims 1 and 4-16 have been amended. Claims 25-27 have been cancelled. Support for all amendments can be found throughout the specification. No new matter has been added.

Pursuant to the Examiner's concern that the title of the invention was not adequately descriptive, Applicants have amended the title of the invention in the manner suggested by the Examiner, *i.e.*, "A Process for the Separation of Alkyl Branched Fatty Acids from a Fatty Acid Mixture".

Claims 1-24 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being obvious over EP 0415697 A2 ("Unichema") in view of U.S. Patent 5,917,097 ("Koehler") and *Analysis of Fats, Oils and Derivatives* (1993) ("Perkins"). The amendments to the claims are believed to place the claims into condition for allowance. Specifically, claim 1 (and, therefore, all claims dependent thereon) has been amended to define the fatty acid mixture as comprising 15-65 wt.% of linear C₁₂ to C₂₄ fatty acids and 35-85 wt.% of alkyl branched C₁₂ to C₂₄ fatty acids. The cited references do not teach or suggest a process for separating alkyl branched fatty acids from a mixture comprising the recited concentrations of linear and alkyl branched fatty acids. As such, the amendments to the claims are believed to render the claims patentable over the cited references.

Applicants point, in this regard, to the fact that the present invention is directed to a process for the separation of alkyl branched fatty acids from linear fatty acids.

In contrast, Unichema is directed to a process for producing a mixture of branched fatty acids having a melting or freezing point that is lower than that of an initial mixture of branched fatty acids. This process involves mixing a starting mixture of branched fatty acids with urea and a lower alcohol to prepare a particular fraction of branched acids having a high ratio of multiple branched to single branched fatty acids. (see, for example, page 2, line 53 – page 3, line 10 of Unichema). In this regard, Table 3 of Unichema further suggests that the important factor in Unichema's process is the ratio of multiple branched to single branched fatty acids.

Therefore, because Unichema is not concerned with separating alkyl branched fatty acids from linear fatty acids and Unichema, therefore, fails to include

any discussion concerning such separation, this reference cannot properly be said to teach or render obvious the pending claims as amended.

The Koehler and Perkins references fail to cure the deficiencies of Unichema. Specifically, for example, Koehler and Perkins fail to teach or suggest a process for separating alkyl branched C₁₂ to C₂₄ fatty acids from a fatty acid mixture comprising the concentrations of linear and alkyl branched fatty acids that are recited in the pending claims as amended.

Therefore, all objections and rejections having been addressed, it is respectfully submitted that the present application is in a condition for allowance and a Notice to that effect is earnestly solicited.

Should any issues remain unresolved, the Examiner is encouraged to contact the undersigned attorney for Applicants at the telephone number indicated below in order to expeditiously resolve any remaining issues.

Respectfully submitted,

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